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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by African Action on AIDS, Associated Country Women of the World, European Union of Women, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas, Hadassah: Women's Zionist Organization of America, International Alliance of Women, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Psychologists, International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Social Workers, International Federation of University Women, International Inner Wheel, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association of Thailand, Pax Romana, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Women's International Zionist Organization and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

We the undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, members of the Vienna Non-Governmental Organization Committee on the Status of Women, present for the information of and consideration by the participants of the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women the following statement on the Theme BEIJING + 20:

After the Second World War, when the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were adopted. the primary goal was to create a world where people could be free from war and free from fear.

Seventy years later and 20 years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, in the year the Millennium Development Goals should be reached, we are still far from reaching this goal, a goal which should be achieved for all human beings.

The Sustainable Development Goals for our planet must be based on Human Rights, equality, in particular gender equality, and access to education for all.

The greatest threats to sustainable development are war and armed conflicts, as they result in destruction and losses for everyone involved.

Women suffer the most in war and armed conflict, as they are subject to both systemic violence based on religious fundamentalism and ethnic discrimination and violence based on the outdated concept of women as the property of men, leading to rape and murder of women and girls as a means to humiliate the enemy.

Even in non-conflict societies, violence against women of all ages, including gender-related killing, must be ranked as the most important issue affecting women and girls globally. We urge the Member States to:

- use all possible constructive means, first and foremost diplomacy, to end armed conflicts and begin peace processes involving all stakeholders, both women and men, according to Security Council Resolution 1325 and the following Security Council Resolutions concerning the Women, Peace, Security agenda;
- ensure that refugees, in particular women and girls, are protected during their flight and in refugee camps, which should be safe and secure places for all;
- take all necessary steps to ensure that gender-based violence — specifically rape — is never used as tool of war, and that women and girls in conflict-affected areas are fully protected;
- implement the Beijing Platform for Action without delay;
- ensure a Stand-Alone Goal for Gender Equality in the Post 2015 Agenda;
- work to achieve real gender equality in all parts of the world as the basis for sustainable development and democracy;
- support human rights as individual and universal rights everywhere and for everyone;

- provide education for all — boys and girls, women and men — from primary to university level and lifelong, as education is the paramount tool to empower people; provide equal chances to all and achieve sustainable development;
- call on parents, educators, administrators, law and policy makers to increase the level of non-discriminatory education for all in order to support women and girls to have access to decision making positions;
- establish and utilize robust systems to collect reliable data and statistics, disaggregated by sex and age, to allow monitoring and evaluation of all indicators and targets agreed for the Post 2015 Agenda, so that all stakeholders can work more effectively to achieve gender equality.